



Department of Community Health

Guidelines for Mail Handling for State Employees

Across the Nation terrorist threats continue to be received in the mail. Please distribute this critical information to your employees as a reminder that we still need to remain alert when handling mail and suspicious packages.

The Department of Management and Budget received information about bioterrorist threats made by mail, in October 2001, from the United States Post Master. We are asking all employees to review the following instructions thoroughly and proceed carefully when handling mail.

Be on Alert for Suspicious Parcels:

What constitutes a “suspicious parcel”? Some typical characteristics Postal Inspectors have detected over the years, which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

1. Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
2. Are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
3. Have no return address, or have one that can't be verified as legitimate.
4. Are of unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
5. Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as “Personal”, “Confidential”, “Caution”, or “Danger”.
6. Have protruding wires, strange odors or stains.
7. Show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.

What to do if you receive a suspicious parcel in the mail or if you receive a bioterrorist threat by mail?

1. Do not handle the mail piece or package suspected of contamination.
2. If you are located in the Lansing area, the Capitol, Secondary or North Complex immediately contact DMB Security Control at 335-3109 and provide your name and exact location. All others should contact 911 for law enforcement.
3. Make sure that damaged or suspicious packages are isolated and the immediate area cordoned off.
4. Ensure that all persons who have touched the mail piece wash their hands with soap and water.
5. If necessary, law enforcement officials will collect the mail, assess the threat situation and coordinate with the FBI.
6. Designated officials will notify local, county, and state health departments.
7. Designated officials will notify the state emergency manager.
8. List all persons who have touched the letter and/or envelope. Include contact information. Provide the list to the investigators.
9. If clothing is visibly contaminated, place these items in plastic bags and keep them wherever you change your clothes and have them available for law enforcement agents.
10. As soon as practical, wash exposed skin with soap and water.

Revised: October 23, 2003

11. Most biological agents do not produce rapid onset of symptoms. However, in the rare case that exposure causes unusual medical symptoms the individual exposed should be referred for medical evaluation.
12. Heightened anxiety is not unusual in these types of situations and is often reduced by calming the exposed individuals.